

Explosion rocks Sanford

DISASTERS (W.V.)

JAN 12 1997

Before Saturday, Jan. 19, 1907, Sanford was a serene mining community on Vigo County's western edge.

At 8:50 p.m. that night, two freight trains — Extra No. 6575 eastbound and No. 99 westbound — were parked at the town's Big Four station as a westbound passenger train crept to a stop.

Suddenly, a resounding explosion — creating a nine-foot deep crater and shredding metal and bodies — destroyed the calm. Twisted rails, cars and body parts were dispersed over 200 yards from the blast site.

A stream of fire accompanying the boom illuminated the horizon for five seconds. Horrid screams pierced the darkness and a stench of burned flesh soon enveloped the area. Sanford's two physicians rushed to the scene, powerless to extricate victims trapped by the heavy wreckage.

When the shocking news reached Terre Haute, emergency rescue crews, journalists and families of the 65 passengers on Train No. 3, which had departed Union Station at 8:30 p.m., tried to reach the site.

Some hiked to Sanford along the railroad right-of-way. Others procured private handcars. The last train to St. Mary's Village, departing Terre Haute at 11 p.m., was crammed with anxious relatives obliged to walk the final four miles through mud and cold. The railroad provided at least one spe-



Historical Perspectives

By Mike McCormick
Special to the Tribune-Star

cial train.

The area's leading newspapers, The Star and The Tribune, hastily published "extra" editions. The Tribune's three Sunday specials were issued at 1:30 a.m., 3 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. The Star's only "Extra" sold out within two hours.

Dawn yielded appalling scenes. A 12-year-old boy's mutilated body was hanging by his clothes from branches high in a tree 100 yards from the 700-foot-wide impact cavity. A small child's leg was retrieved from a pond. Three cremated skeletons were extracted from the mangle and four bloody torsos were located in a woods near the track.

Arms, legs, hair and fingers surfaced as massive search parties — and some crooks — sought jewelry and trinkets to identify the dead. Nearby houses were in ruins. Windows were shattered several miles away.

The rival newspapers presented several early casualty lists, estimating between 22 and 32

fatalities. The final "official" tally was 15. Vigo County's largest unnatural tragedy until the Jan. 3, 1963 Home Packing Co. explosion claimed 16 lives.

"The most ghastly tragedy in Indiana railroad annals," officials declared.

There were some variances in the published victim lists. All death rolls specified J.W. Southerland of Paris, Ill.; John Franklin, brakeman, Mattoon, Ill.; A.B. Hicks, Clarke W. Steele, Noah Wolfe and J.W.S. Miller of Sanford; Frank Fiedler of Bellefontaine, Ohio; John A. Bowen, Ashmore, Ill.; and H.W. Southcott, express manager, of Shelbyville, Ill. The concluding "definitive" log added William Davis, Perry (or Harry) Duck and James Denton of Sanford; and Dr. W.H. Haslett of Grandview, Ill. Two corpses were unidentified for several weeks.

Some itemized as deceased in early accounts, including Mr. and Mrs. Reed Wolfe and their two children; H. Blakely of Findlay, Ohio (whose body was taken to P.J. Ryan's morgue in Terre Haute); and the Kiever boy from Paris who was found in the tree, inexplicably were excluded from the last inventory.

Naming victims was not the only mystery associated with the Sanford disaster 90 years ago next Sunday. A more baffling puzzle was its cause.

Continued next week

SANFORD

Explosion mystery unsolved

T-S JAN 19 1997

Sandford explosion, Part II

For several months, coroner's juries and the Indiana Railroad Commission vainly probed for answers to the tragic Jan. 19, 1907, explosion.

One train parked at the Sandford station included a sealed car with 500 gunpowder kegs produced by Equitable Powder Co. of Alton, Ill., yet investigating bodies concluded that nitroglycerine or dynamite activated the blast.

"Ordinary powder, of the sort they say was in the [freight] car, never would have dug a hole in the ground," Phil H. Penna, respected Indiana Bituminous Coal Operators' secretary, explained. "Powder, when it explodes, goes up, not down. The contrary is true regarding dynamite or nitroglycerine."

Inexplicably, no victim suffered powder burns though 500 kegs exploded. Atmospheric tests were not conducted but Rose Poly chemist John V. White discerned no dynamite or nitroglycerine traces either.

Robert E. Brown saw a fireball southwest of Sandford moments before sensing shock waves but no meteorite particles were located. The prospect that an errant spark invaded the powder car was rejected. A nearby gas line, inspected for leaks, also was eliminated as a cause.

Elmer Kelly found a spent dynamite stick at the site. The search also uncovered a black gunpowder can. Equitable Powder vowed that its cans were



Historical Perspectives

By Mike McCormick
Special to the Tribune-Star

enameled green.

A handwritten note in a victim's pocket, reading: "To Minnie, 214 North 2nd Street, Terre Haute, Indiana," stimulated inquiry after The Tribune received and published an anonymous typewritten letter dated Jan. 24.

"I will not spin a yarn," the message began, "nor will I advance a theory but I will tell a tale — a plain, unvarnished tale — and those who read this letter may draw their own conclusions."

"Seven years ago there lived in the vicinity of Terre Haute a pretty young girl. In this story her name is Minnie Winters because ... that isn't her name. In the same vicinity there lived two men — one we will name Jack Hastings, because that isn't his name, and the other we shall know as William Black, because that isn't his name ..."

Winters and Black, both honor students, seemed destined for each other. Hastings, "slow and podding," was a "youth of great integrity" while Black was

"full of deviltry."

After a peddler was beaten and died, suspect Black vanished from the area. Winters and Hastings eventually wed, "moving to a town near Terre Haute." Black reappeared five years later "sick at heart" over his school chums' bliss, "degenerating into the commonest kind of crook" — a box car tramp looting grocery stores — and "nursing a morbid desire for revenge on the man who married the girl he loved."

Ascertaining that Winters and her 4-year-old child were on an accommodation train, Black awaited, tossing a bomb under a parked rail car labeled "POWDER" as the excursion pulled into Sandford.

The letter ended abruptly, contending "the mystery of the Sandford wreck will never be cleared — unless —"

Predictably, neither the author nor the disaster's origins were detected.

On the night of Feb. 21 to 22, Sandford Methodist Church, James Reece's Drug Store and the Shickel & Johnson general store were leveled by separate dynamite blasts. Saloonkeeper Henry F. McDonald promptly was arrested.

Never tied to the rail disaster, the impulsive McDonald nonetheless is distinguished in Vigo Circuit Court annals for slaying detective chief William Dwyer in the courtroom after a jury convicted him.

That, however, is the topic for a future column.

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Community Affairs File

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TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA

Compressor Explodes As Test Is Run

T.H. Disasters
T.H. Trib. 9/17/63

By MARIAN PERRY and JACK A. HUGHES

A compressor being tested at the new Central Nitrogen, Inc., plant north of the city blew up Tuesday morning killing one worker, injuring nine others and causing considerable damage to the building where the equipment was housed.

The fatality victim died shortly after reaching the hospital. Two other injured were admitted for treatment and the remainder were examined and released.

The explosion occurred in the compressor building of the ammonia plant of the \$20 million chemical complex which is nearing completion on North U. S. 41.

A spokesman for Chemical and Industrial Corp., which has major construction contracts for the plant, said engineers and workmen were testing the multi-stage industrial compressor, "running the compression pressure up to minimum test standards." An observer indicated the equipment may have been at 3,000 pressure when it blew out although it has a maximum rating of 6,000 pounds.

The dead man and two hospitalized victims were reported to have been standing a few feet from the center of the explosion.

One of the workmen treated and released for minor injuries

said John Sasso, an engineer, was "blown right through the floor." Sasso died at the hospital within five minutes after his arrival.

Officials declined to try to pinpoint the cause of the blast. Apparently a component of the compressor identified as a fourth-stage discharge snubber was the actual location. Two metal plugs about two inches in diameter were blown out and ripped through a steel wall of the building leaving a three-inch hole.

Observers said several hundred workmen were in the general area of the compressor building at the time but relatively few were in the close vicinity.

Metal Scattered.

Fragments of metal littered the ground around the building, a steel structure whose metal grating floor is 10 feet above the ground level.

No estimate of the extent of damage was given by insurance adjusters on the scene or by company officials. Alfred Bien, Chemico project engineer, met newsmen at the gate and Harry Bryant, engineer, escorted them to the accident site and explained the equipment. However, he did not discuss the probable cause. One

Continued On Page 2, Col. 2.

employee mentioned the possibility of "a faulty piece of equipment" but added "nobody knows yet."

The entire unit will be torn down to determine the cause, it was understood.

No Delay Expected.

Ernest C. Davis, plant manager of Central Nitrogen, said he did not expect any delay in dedication of the new facility set for October nor in the start of full production in November.

"But at this point," he said, "no one knows. The equipment will have to be checked out completely and the findings from that might result in some delay."

One of the first on the scene of the explosion was Mrs. Gladys Conder, Chemico company nurse, who administered first aid. The three seriously hurt victims were taken to Union Hospital in Thomas and Callahan ambulances and the seven with possible injuries were driven in company cars. All were Chemico employees except three who are employed by Potter Electric Company here.

First report of the blast came about 9 o'clock when a company watchman alerted law enforcement authorities. The explosion reportedly was felt by residents in the Otter Creek area. One worker, Willis Williams, 2221 South Seventh street, said it was so loud it probably was heard for several miles.

The entire area was immediately closed off to evacuate all personnel and to exclude curious spectators.

At first report there was to be no admittance for 24 hours but a CNI official revised the order and gates were opened at 11 o'clock for newsmen.

The area remains closed pending further investigation.

The Central Nitrogen plant which has been on a 208-acre tract in Otter Creek Township under construction for one year has been making test runs in recent weeks and is scheduled to go into production within a month. At peak production the plant will employ a force of 200 to 250 persons. Its facilities include a 350-ton per day ammonia plant, a 350-ton per day nitric acid plant, a 400-ton per day nitrate plant and a 8,000-ton per day nitrogen solutions plant.

CNI is co-operatively owned by four Farm Bureau corporations in Indiana, Illinois and Ohio and will distribute its products in the three-state area. It is the fifth such nitrogen plant to be built in the U. S. and the first in the Midwest.

Officers from the Terre Haute Police Department, Indiana State Police and Vigo County Sheriff's office were on the scene to assist plant protection personnel.

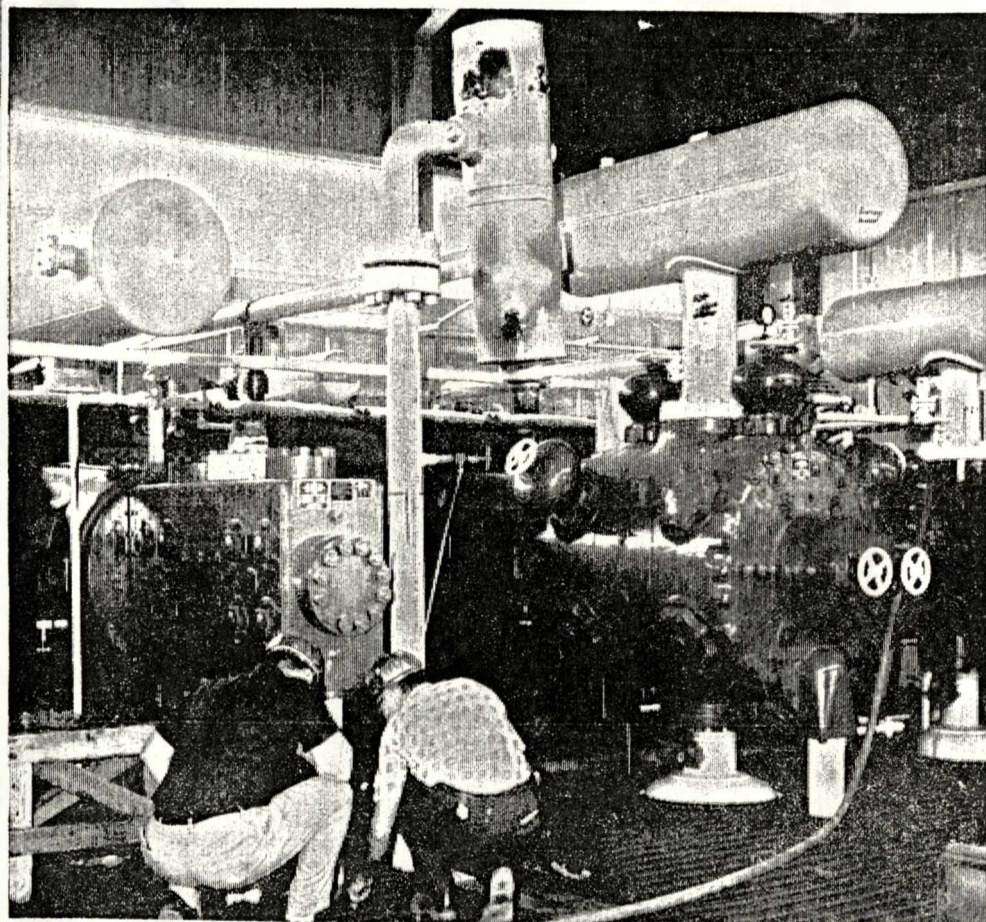
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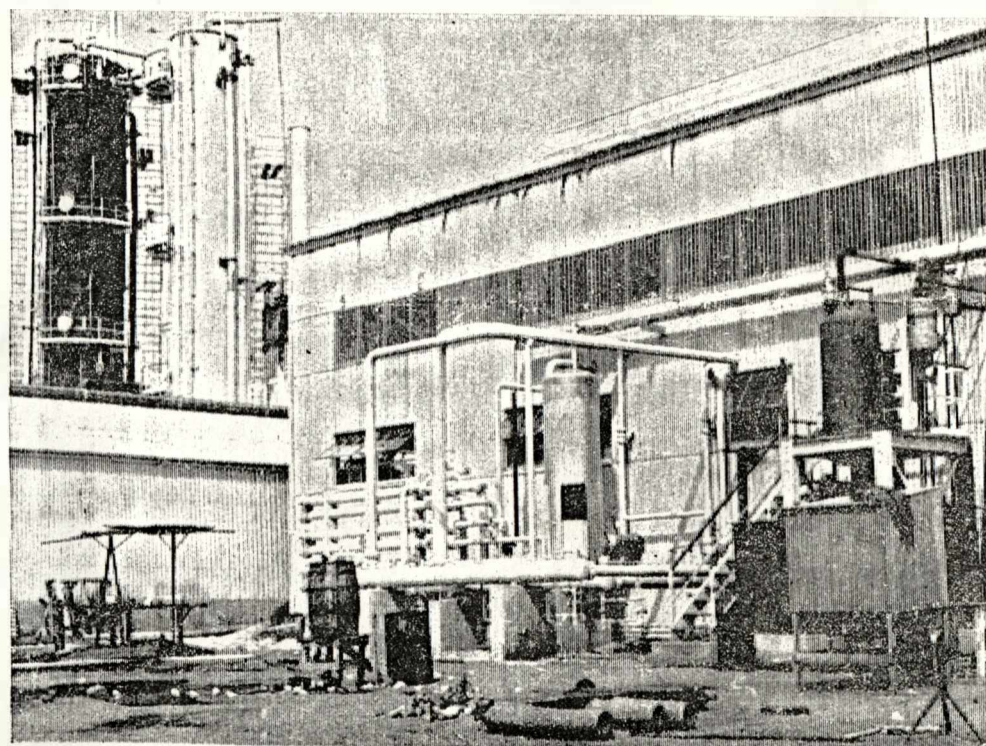
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Central Nitrogen Plant & explosion

sep - 1963



THE EXPLOSION OCURRED in the fourth stage discharge "snubber" of this huge multi-stage industrial stationary compressor, spinning the "snubber" unit around on its supporting pipe and apparently disintegrating a quantity of metal piping. A solid metal plug about two inches in diameter was blown through the steel wall of the building and considerable damage was to some metal work below the steel floor grating.



CENTRAL NITROGEN'S COMPRESSOR BUILDING of the Ammonia Plant, a view of the south side of the structure, in which one man lost his life and nine workers were injured when a compressor component exploded during testing operations. Photos by Martin.

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TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA

Sep 1963

Casualty List

9/17/63

T.H. T. I.B.

The list of dead and injured in an explosion at the Central Nitrogen, Inc., plant north of Terre Haute on U. S. Highway 41 Tuesday morning included:

DEAD

JOHN SASSO, 55, 1148 North Eighth street, Clinton.

INJURED

KENNETH PECK, 49, RR 1, Clinton.

LUKE MARTIN, 42, RR 3, Clinton.

KENNETH ERNHART, 54, 736 Blackman street, Clinton.

CHARLES HUTCHINGS, 54, Cayuga.

GARY JONES, 28, RR 1, Vincennes.

ROBERT STULTZ, 58, 146 Whitcomb street, Clinton.

JOHN THOMAS, 65, Dana.

HAROLD NICKLESS, 40, RR 1, Terre Haute.

FRANK McNABB, 49, RR 2, Robinson, Ill.

Two of the above victims of the blast, Peck and Martin, were admitted to Union Hospital and the others were treated and released.

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DRESSER PLANT EXPLOSION

3 Painters

Are Injured; All Critical

T.H. Files
T.H. Files, 7/18/63
T 7-18-63
An explosion and fire about 9:45 a.m. Thursday in the basement of the Dresser Power Plant, five miles south of Terre Haute on the west side of the Wabash River, sent three men to St. Anthony Hospital.

According to the Vigo County Sheriff's Office, the injured men were:

TED McMAHEL of Indianapolis.

GENE DEARBORN of English.

AVEN EASTRIDGE of English.

According to an early report, all three were listed in critical condition at St. Anthony Hospital. The state police reported that Dearborn and McMahon were in the poorest condition and said they understood that Dearborn was not expected to live. They were painting a tank when the blast occurred.

The Public Service Company of Indiana operates the Dresser plant, which is a generating plant for electricity.

Walter T. Christie, local plant superintendent, said a "complete and thorough investigation will be made," but said he knew little about the accident and could give few details.

Plant superintendent Christie declined to co-operate with news media in covering the blast but a call to PSC officials at Plainfield brought full co-operation.

A TRIBUNE cameraman was refused entrance to the explosion area and a WTHI-TV cameraman was ordered out of the area by Christie under threat of being carried out bodily. The television lensman left voluntarily.

A Public Service spokesman in Plainfield said the three injured men were all employees of the Cook and Glass Company of Indianapolis which was contracted for routine painting maintenance at the plant.

He said the injured men were painting a 10,000-gallon water storage tank used in the boiler condenser cycle when the blast

Continued On Page 2, Col. 4.

occurred. The tank was empty at the time.

The three men were said to be inside the tank.

The cause of the blast and brief fire that followed was not immediately known, he said, but it was theorized that fumes from the paint were ignited by a spark.

There was no equipment loss and no effect to electrical service in the area. Superintendent

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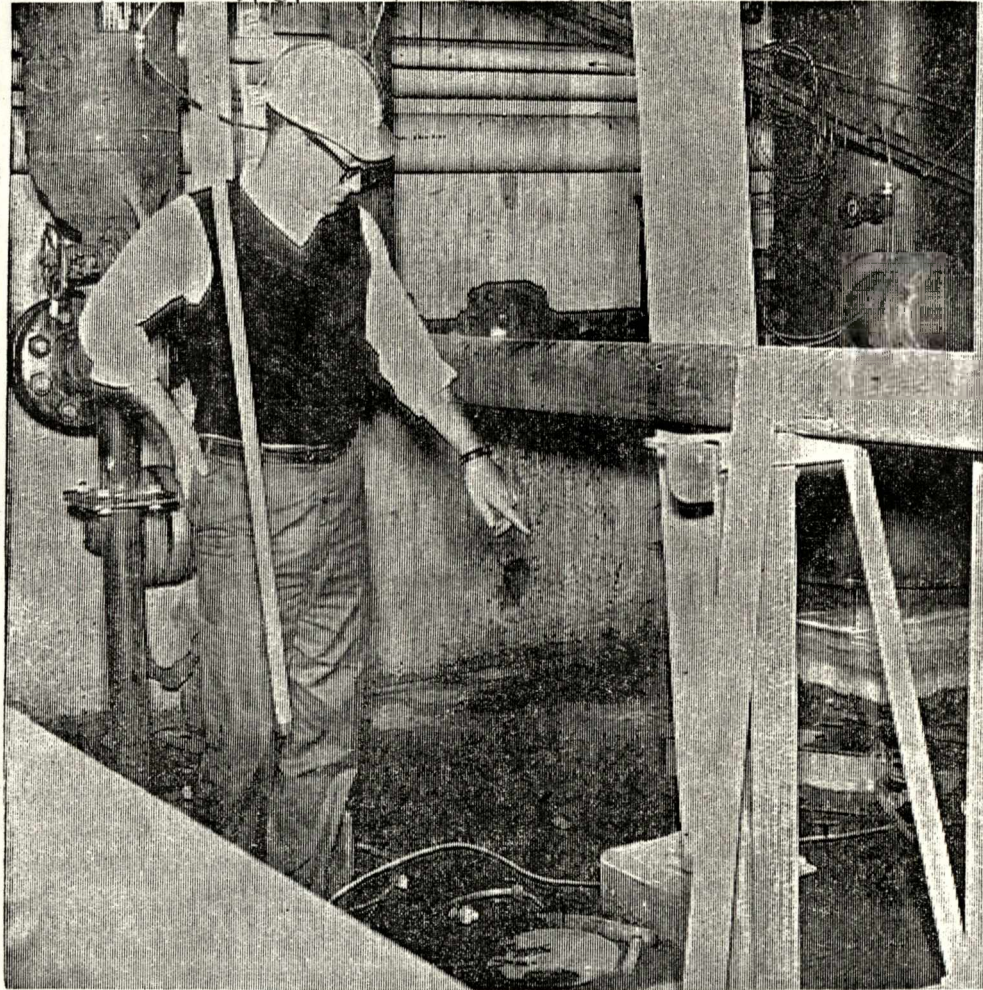
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Explosion - Dresser Plant 7-18-63

Plant Blast Kills Worker

T.H. Disasters - T.H. Star - 2/18/63



BLAST-ROCKED BUILDING—Harry Bryant, field engineer for the Chemical Construction Corporation, points to a support column knocked off its foundation by an explosion which ripped through the compressor building of the Central Nitrogen, Inc., plant north of North Terre Haute Friday morning. The support post is located directly beneath the site of the explosion, separated only by a metal grated floor. Bryant indicates large bolts sheared from post by force of blast.

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Community Affairs File

Central Nitrogen Explosion 9-63

Nine Are Injured In Explosion at Central Nitrogen

BY KENT HARRIS

One man was fatally injured and nine others hurt, two seriously, in a blast Tuesday morning which rocked the compressor building of the new Central Nitrogen Plant under construction north of North Terre Haute.

Fatally injured was John Sasso, 55 years old, 1148 North Eighth Street, Clinton, pipefitter foreman for the Chemical Construction Corporation, a general contractor on the new fertilizer plant north on U. S. 41.

MOST SERIOUSLY injured of the nine men hurt in the explosion of the huge 5,000 horsepower compressor were Kenneth Leroy Peck, 49 years old, R. R. 1, Clinton, and Robert Luke Martin, 42, R. R. 3, Clinton.

Union Hospital officials Tuesday night said Peck and Martin were listed in "fair" condition and still suffering from shock. The hospital also said Peck suffered the loss of an eye in the blast.

Four other "Chemico" employees and three Potter Electric Company workmen were rushed to the north side hospital where they were given treatment for minor injuries and were later released.

LESS SERIOUSLY injured were Harold Nickless, 40, R. R. 1; Kenneth Ernhart, 54, 736 Blackman Street, Clinton; Robert Stultz, 58, 146 Whitcomb Street, Clinton; John Thomas, 65, Dana; Charles Hutchings, 54, Cayuga; Frank McNabb, 49, R. R. 2, Robinson, Ill., and Gary Jones, 28, R. R. 1, Vincennes.

Harry Bryant, a field engineer for the contracting company said Sasso, Peck and Martin were standing next to the compressor when a device described by the engineer as a "discharge snubber" failed in the fourth stage of the five-stage compressing process. Cause of the explosion which ripped through the welded junction of the huge compressor and the "discharge snubber" bottle is unknown.

A discharge snubber is an auxiliary unit designed to handle compression overflow.

The three men were less than four feet from the explosion area. Workers in an area below the site of the explosion were knocked as far as 25 feet from their work stations.

IMPACT OF the blast hurled pieces of metal through the corrugated siding of the structural steel building at points 75 feet from the discharge snubber.

The explosion knocked two pillars from their foundations, and jarred a number of large steel pipes from their mountings in an area below the blast.

"Chemico" officials said the compressor was one of two of its type in the building, and had been undergoing a test for the last two weeks. Previous reports of the amount of pressure on the compressor and tank were denied. However, a spokesman said the system was running far below its highest pressure capacity at the time of the blast. It was speculated that the blast was of the air-oil type.

"CHEMICO" OFFICIALS said the compressor, one of the largest in the world, will be completely dismantled and rebuilt. During dismantling stages, parts will be inspected to determine the cause of the explosion.

First report of the blast came at 9 o'clock when a plant watchman alerted state police and the sheriff's office. Time of Sasso's death was 9:33 o'clock, about five minutes after his admission to the hospital.

Mrs. Gladys Conder, "Chemico" nurse, was one of the first on the scene. She administered first aid to the injured workers.

The three most seriously hurt men were taken to the hospital in Thomas and Callahan ambulances.

ERNEST C. DAVIS, resident manager of the \$20 million Central Nitrogen plant Tuesday night said the plant was scheduled to begin operations in October. He pointed out that the "Chemico" firm was building sections of the plant for Central Nitrogen.

He said that Central Nitrogen will not be involved in the operation of the plant until its completion.

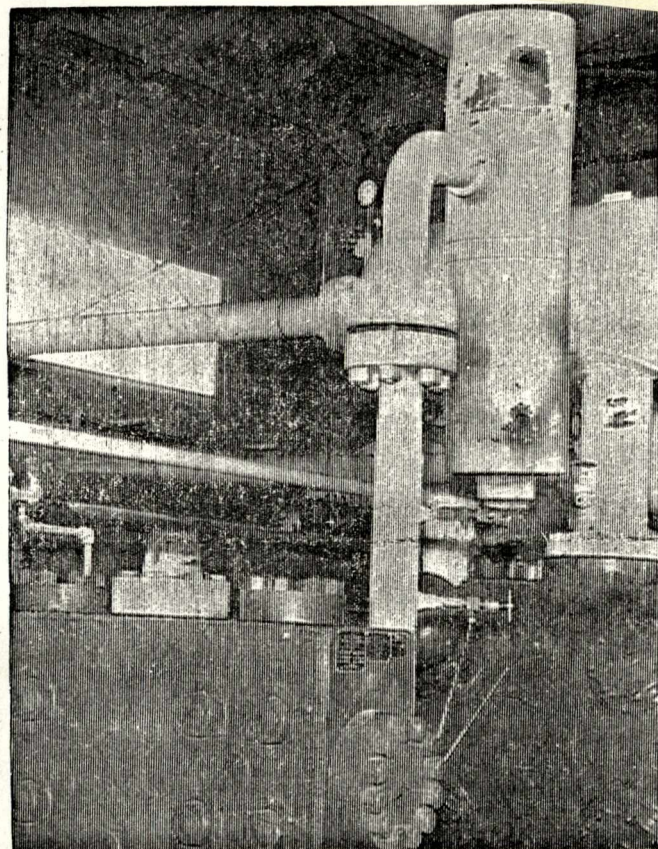
Davis said Central Nitrogen employees are in a training program.

The "Chemico" office said Sasso, a pipefitter and member of Terre Haute Local No. 157, Plumbers and Steamfitters Union, had been employed here since March 22.

THE BODY was taken to the Karanovich Funeral Home in Clinton where services will be conducted at 10 o'clock Friday morning. The Rev. Father Jerome Bennett will officiate and burial will be in Walnut Grove Cemetery, Clinton. Friends may call after 6 o'clock Wednesday evening.

Born in Clinton, Sasso was a veteran of World War II, and a member of the Rosedale American Legion Post. Surviving are the widow, Esther; two sons, John Sasso, at home, and Louis Gene Sasso of Seaside, Cal.; a daughter, Miss Theresa Marie Sasso, at home; two brothers, Charles Sasso of Gary, and Tillo Sasso of Provo, Utah; two sisters, Mrs. Rena Nardi and Mrs. Norma Farina, both of Clinton, and three grandchildren.

Central Nitrogen Explosion 9-63



Nitrogen (Photos by Ken Anderson)
POINT OF EXPLOSION—This discharge snubber, upper right, an auxiliary unit designed to handle compression overflow on a 5,000-horsepower compressor at the new Central Nitrogen plant north of North Terre Haute, exploded Tuesday morning, fatally injuring a foreman and hurting nine other workers. Force of the blast ripped the discharge bottle from its junction at the compressor, and twisted the snubber six-inch pipe around 90 degrees to the right. Two two-inch steel plugs were hurled through the corrugated steel wall nearly 75 feet away, leaving two three-inch holes in the walls.

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TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA

Central Nitrogen Explosion 9-63



^{9/18/63}
BLAST VICTIM—John Sasso, 55 years old, of 1148 North Eighth Street, Clinton, was fatally injured in an explosion which jarred the compressor building at the Central Nitrogen plant north of North Terre Haute Tuesday morning. Sasso, pipefitter foreman for the Chemical Construction Corporation, died five minutes after his admission to Union Hospital shortly before 9:30 o'clock Tuesday morning. He had worked at the local plant since March 22. *Nitrogen Plant*

Community Affairs File

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TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA

BRAZIL W I

No. 28

BRAZIL, INDIAN

COALMONT POWDER
MILL BLOWS UP

For the second time in less than six months, a disastrous powder mill explosion occurred this morning when the press mill at the United States powder company's plant at Coalmont in the extreme southwest corner of Clay county blew up.

Various reports have been received from Coalmont as to the number of killed and injured and the amount of damage done and authentic news is almost unobtainable on account of the excitement prevailing there. According to the most authentic information three men were killed outright and four or five injured. The list of dead and injured reported is as follows:

Killed.

KRETE SIMMONS.
CHARLES GORBY.
LON SMITH.

Injured

CHARLES MYERS fatally injured
GEO. GORBY, badly burned.

SAM STEWART, seriously injured

The explosion occurred at exactly 7:28 this morning and was distinctly felt in this city. Some citizens report two or three heavy jars while others say that the doors shook violently and the chinaware rattled. As the Coalmont powder mill is about thirty miles from this city the shock was not violent enough to cause any alarm and little attention was paid to it, many people believing it a shot put off in a shale pit or some workings about the city.

The United States Powder company's mill is located about three-quarters of a mile north of Coalmont. The buildings are scattered over a 160 acre farm and are surrounded by a number of houses which were erected by the company for its employees. Bert Sarchett, formerly of this city, is superintendent of the mill and lived within a short distance of the plant. This is the first explosion that has occurred at the Coalmont mill which was built several years ago.

many at Jasonville were shattered by the explosion.

WALSH TAKES AN APPEAL

CHICAGO, March 14.—John R. Walsh, former president of the Chicago National bank of this city and convicted of illegal use of the funds of that institution, was yesterday denied a new trial by Judge Anderson of the United States court and sentenced to serve five years in the penitentiary at Fort Leavenworth.

As soon as the court had announced his decision refusing to grant a new trial, the attorneys for the defense entered a motion to arrest judgment, which they argued for some time.

It was the general opinion that counsel for the defense would consume considerable time in arguing the motion for the arrest of judgment, but after Attorney Hart had spoken for 30 minutes, the court interrupted him by saying:

"I think you may place those matters before the court of appeals, Mr. Hart. You are making no showing here."

Turning to the prisoner, Judge Anderson said:

"Mr. Walsh, have you anything to say why I should not now pronounce judgment upon you?"

Walsh, without arising, shook his head slightly, and the court said:

"The character of the evidence and the character of the crime of which this defendant has been found guilty call for extreme judgment. The facts are however, that this defendant is 70 years old and that mere imprisonment is of itself so heavy a punishment in a case of this kind, I have concluded that the law will be satisfied with the minimum penalty, which is five years."

The court further directed that all the counts in the indictment be served concurrently and further directed that the defendant pay the entire cost of the trial.

An application was immediately made to Judge Grosscup of the United States Court of Appeals for a supersedeas, which was granted, and Walsh was released under bonds of \$50,000 pending the hearing of his appeal.

CONSIDER
SUIT

For the eighteen damages it on account consolidated in the apparent of the cases Putnam Circuit last term to this court company today Circuit court plaintiffs, ask from prosecution the company the court to at the next to plaintiff's com

Eighteen damages of \$5,000 company by Rosebud explosion 1906. The plaintiff Alexander L. Danhour, Lewis David Morgan James, Riley Erkamp, Joseph Yemm, Samuel Emory LeMay Frank Gleason

All but the to Putnam court The company that if it is results severally company costs and asks that court be restrain their several that each be court and asks that the court said several order to avoid company.

If the court petition all of who have comparison an thus plish the

Wednesday evening, March 18 1908

Brazil Weekday Democrat

Scanned by Nebraska Hyde

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Word was received from Coalmont this afternoon that Charles Myers was not killed but is probably fatally injured. Myers moved to Coalmont some time ago from Cory and had been working in the powder mill for a year or more.

Lon Smith, who was so badly injured in the explosion, died about noon today, leaving the total number of dead three. Lon Smith is a son of John Smith of Morgan's crossing and is well known here. He went to Coalmont about a year ago to work in the powder mill, but previous to that time

convicted of illegal use of the maps of that institution, was yesterday denied a new trial by Judge Anderson of the United States court and sentenced to serve five years in the penitentiary at Fort Leavenworth.

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HUGHES BY ACCLAMATION FOR SECOND TERM

The convention for the 13th Judicial Circuit of Indiana to name a Democratic candidate for prosecutor convened at Greencastle this morning at 11 o'clock and got down to business at once.

Judge Rawley of Clay county was named for chairman of the convention and he accepted the duty in a very happy speech. The Putnam county delegate who placed the judge in nomination for permanent chairman said

It on account consolidated the apparent of the cases Putnam Circuit last term

to this court company today Circuit court plaintiffs, ask from prosecution the company the court to at the next plaintiffs' conference. Eighteen days sum of \$5,000

company by Rosebud expired 1906. The plaintiff Alexander Le Danhour, Lew David Morgan James, Riley erkamp, Jos Yemm, Samuel Emory Lem Frank Glesk

All but the to Putnam county The company that if it is results several company's cost and asks that court be rest their several that each be court and answer that the court said several order to avoid company.

If the court petition all of who have been company will answer in the thus the completed the de the cases back and consolidated cause of action first case of the Clay Circuit

Miss Edna school in Bra home folks.

Our protracted Wednesday church with Claude Tril miners' conference

this afternoon that Charles Myers was not killed but is probably fatally injured. Myers moved to Coalmont some time ago from Cory and had been working in the powder mill for a year or more.

Lon Smith, who was so badly injured in the explosion, died about noon today, leaving the total number of dead three. Lon Smith is a son of John Smith of Morgan's crossing and is well known here. He went to Coalmont about a year ago to work in the powder mill, but previous to that time had been working at the carpenter trade here.

Simmons is also of this city. All of the dead and injured, it is reported were in the press mill when it blew up. No explanation of the cause of the explosion has yet been given. All of the men who were killed or injured in the explosion were married men and lived in the vicinity of the mill.

The United States Powder company was an independent concern and had no connection with the DuPont powder trust which owned the destroyed Fontant Powder mill. The Coalmont mill was erected by a stock company of coal operators of the Sullivan and Greene county fields, and had been in operation about three years. It had a capacity of 1,000 kegs of finished powder a day and was not as large as the Fontanet mill.

The force of the explosion did considerable damage to the houses in the vicinity of the powder mill and also at Coalmont. Window panes were broken and chimneys blown down for some distance from the scene of the explosion.

A special from Sullivan says that the explosion occurred in the tenth wheel room and is supposed to have been caused by a spark from some of the machinery. The explosion occurred just as the day shift was relieving the night shift and all that were in the building were either killed or injured. The building in which the explosion occurred was a large brick structure and was blown to the ground.

Charles Gorby was blown about 200 feet in the air and was killed in falling to the ground. George Gorby, a nephew, was badly burned. Smith's death resulted from terrible burns about the head and face. Krete Simmons was burned to death, Charles Myers and Sam Stewart, two of the injured, were taken to the hospital at Terre Haute.

It is claimed that every plate glass window in the town of Coalmont and

FOR SECOND TERM

The convention for the 13th Judicial Circuit of Indiana to name a Democratic candidate for prosecutor convened at Greencastle this morning at 11 o'clock and got down to business at once.

Judge Rawley of Clay county was named for chairman of the convention and he accepted the duty in a very happy speech. The Putnam county delegate who placed the judge in nomination for permanent chairman said that he wanted to name the most popular man in Clay county for the honor and when he named Judge Rawley the enthusiasm was unbounded. The editor of this paper was elected secretary of the convention and then, as Clay county announced that she had no candidate for the honor, Hon. T. C. Grooms, in a neat speech, nominated Prosecutor Hughes for a second term and Ira Holland of Clay county seconded the nomination and moved that the vote be by acclamation. This done and Mr. Hughes, for a second time, received the unanimous vote of a convention naming him for the Prosecuting attorney of the 13th Judicial district. Hughes accepted the nomination in a neat speech and the convention adjourned.

Those who went over from here to attend the convention were James Harris, William Helton, John G. H. Kilgler, Ira Holland, Bob Britton, Walter Lee and W. H. Gildewell.

CHIMNEY WAS KNOCKED OFF

The first damage from lightning in this city this year occurred during the severe storm between 11 and 12 o'clock Saturday night when the fine residence of Charles Bolin on the corner of Washington and Compton street was struck by lightning.

A bolt of lightning struck the furnace chimney, demolishing the chimney and tearing a hole through the roof as large as the body of a man. The electric light wires were also burned out and some damage done to the interior. Mr. Bolin estimates the damage to his residence at \$75 to \$100.

As far as has been reported this is the only damage resulting from Saturday night's storm. The storm was unusually severe and the rain fell in torrents, flooding the pavement to the top of the curb. Many theatre goers who did not hurry home got caught in the worst of the storm and received a thorough drenching.

and consolidating a cause of action. The first case of the kind the Clay Circuit co

ASHB

Miss Edna Keiser school in Brazil, at home folks.

Our protracted n Wednesday evening church with Rev. B.

Claude Tribble miners' convention

A great number here last Saturday.

Wm. T. Slack, J. Tilley were in Ter

Diploma examina here Saturday, the Dunnagan.

Clifford Moss att party on Arthur Co avenue last Thursd

Mrs. Oliver Mishl iting her parents, N son Starrett.

Miss Helen Ste Point visited her evening.

Mr. and Mrs. J. Olive Slack spent Haute.

Mr. and Mrs. C family of Oklahoma Monday evening to stay with her father

Prof. O. T. Dun our school, was un latter part of last illness.

Mrs. Dr. Moss, sister, Helen, spent S

David Hulley gave evening at his home and a large crowd those present were Mayrose, Mary U Fogel, Ruth Stevens, Zora Lucas, Marie May and Elizabeth Mack Moss, Earl Thler, Hawry Witty, Clifford Moss, Cye Fortner, Gifford and Roscoe Hulley, Clay Moss, Barnum Moo Fred and Oscar Fernsell. All returned four and said they time in all their lives.

Susan Gregg, the Postmaster Gregg skating on their skid street last evening.

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ODGE

March 25 1908

The fourth death was added to the list of victims of the explosion of the United States Powder company's mill at Coalmont yesterday when Charles Myers died at St. Anthony's hospital at Terre Haute last evening.

William Meyers, a brother of the dead man; Sam Stewart and Charles Gorby, who were injured in the explosion, are getting along nicely and it is believed that they will recover.

A. G. Cummings, manager of the United States Powder company, stated last evening that the destroyed press mill would be rebuilt at once but that in the meantime the mill would continue in operation as the company had another press mill which was not damaged by the explosion.

The remains of Charles Myers will be taken to Riley where the funeral will occur tomorrow morning, interment at the Oak Hill cemetery at Riley. The remains of Lon Smith were brought to this city this afternoon and taken to the home of his parents at Morgan's Crossing.

Simmons and George Gorby, the other two victims of the explosion, will be buried at Coalmont where they lived.

The building in which the press was located was torn to pieces and timbers were scattered over several acres. The press machine itself, which weighed more than 20 tons, was thrown out of the building and turned completely over. Then the men who were in the building were thrown high into the air. George Gorby was thrown 300 yards from the building. Where his body struck the ground a hole was made in the soft surface large enough to bury a man. The body then bounced about 50 feet. It was mutilated beyond recognition and was burned to a crisp. The bodies of the other men who were killed were also badly burned and mangled. People living two miles from the scene of the explosion declare that they saw the bodies of the men in the white smoke when the explosion occurred.

The greatest confusion followed. The people who had friends and relatives working at the mill rushed to the scene of the accident in frantic grief. The relatives of the men who were killed were prostrated with grief when the mutilated bodies were seen and the whole scene about the mills was pathetic.

BRYAN CLUB IS ORGA

Stokes Jackson, chairman Democratic State Central Cor addressed a meeting of Der precinct committeemen and workers in the Y. M. I. hall la ing. After getting acquainted the committeemen and worke Jackson spoke at some length importance of the approachi paign and brought such good the indications of a brilliant cratic victory next fall that he great enthusiasm and was vi cheered when he predicted t tion of William Jennings Br November.

Mr. Jackson was followed number of local Democrats wh short talks on organizing for t paign and at the close of the s a Bryan club was organized. Democrat present put his n the roll as a member of th County Bryan Club and con were appointed to draft by-laws range other details of the prei organization. Another meeting held next Tuesday evening a officers of the Bryan club will l ed and the organization perfe

State Chairman Jackson was pleased with the enthusiasm st the Democracy here and stat he was prepared to stay all the meeting if necessary to a Bryan club.

Mr. Jackson spent the night city and after calling on a nu Democrats this morning left o'clock for Rockville. Cl Jackson is making a tour of t getting acquainted with the wo each of the ninety-two countie state and is much encouraged enthusiasm prevalling amo Democrats all over the stat Jackson expects to visit Braz later in the campaign.

THOMAS A. MILLS MURDER CASE TAKES NEW

SPENCER, Ind., March 18 Malone, who gives his home a ville, Ky., was arrested yester ternoon between here and Qu brought to this city charged murder of Thomas A. Mills, weeks ago. Emory Cassell, w jail at Indianapolis, charged crime, gave the description of

ket of Non-Office Seekers



BYRON MCMAHAN,
FOR
CIRCUIT
JUDGE.

ROBT.
HIATT,
FOR
COUNTY
SURVEYOR.

W. H. H. QUICK,
FOR
REPRESENTATIVE.

HOMER
KIMBERLIN,
FOR
REPRESENTATIVE.

ANDERSON, Ind., March 17.—The work of the Republican county convention places five citizens of Anderson on the ticket, who, with one exception, have never held office. Two of the nominees are old-time Republicans, who have been recognized as important factors in politics in Madison County for a quarter of a generation; yet neither of them have hitherto been elected to any public office. Byron McMahon, the nominee for circuit judge to succeed John F. McAdams, has been a member of the Madison County bar for many years and was at one time associated in law

practice with W. S. Diven. Dr. W. H. H. Quick, who is in the race for representative because his friends put him there is a well-known banker and manufacturer of this city. The other three men represent the new wing of the young Republicans of the party and the large majority polled by them indicates their strength and popularity. Blanchard J. Horne is judge of the City Court. Homer Kimberlin, candidate for representative, is perhaps the youngest man on the ticket. Robert Hiatt is the assistant county surveyor and has been a candidate by storm.

'Land O' Goshen;' Mayor Bests 'Dads'

OSHEN, Ind., March 17.—To prevent the city from acquiring the premises for use as a city hall, Mayor Miller today defeated the plan of a tile council and bought the historic well mansion facing the court house are. He announced he will use it as a permanent residence. Last night

FIRES INTO A CROWD

KILLS ONE; TRIES SUICIDE

Young Man at Cleveland Turns Gun Loose on Diners---Reason for Act Unknown.

FOUR MEN PERISH IN POWDER MILL

Explosion in Coalmont Plant
Hurls Bodies Hundreds
of Feet.

SEVERE SHOCK IS FELT
IN MANY NEARBY TOWNS

Manager A. G. Cummings Says
Cause of Accident Is Not
Known---Plant Will Be Able to
Resume Operations at Once.

THE DEAD.

GEORGE GORBY SR.
CRETE SIMMONS.
ALONZO SMITH.
CHARLES MIERS.

THE INJURED.

Sam Stewart, ribs broken and
shoulder crushed.
Charles Gorby, slightly bruised
and burned.

Hurling men hundreds of feet in the air, rending the building into bits, the press mill of the United States Powder Company at Coalmont exploded at 10 o'clock yesterday morning. The result four men are dead and two seriously injured. The concussion broke glass in houses several miles away. About forty men were employed about the plant at the time of the explosion, but all escaped injury except the six in the press mill. The rest of the plant was not damaged, and it was said last night that operations would be resumed at once.

The company has offices in the Opera House Block. Alfred G. Cummings, manager, was notified immediately after the explosion and arrived on the scene. He said that the cause could not be determined. The plant had been in operation four years and this is the first accident.

"The property has no insurance," said Mr. Cummings. "The explosion will be no interruption of work on account of the explosion. The press mill of the plant is 1200 feet high and have been running full force."

"We have not been able to determine anything that would give a clear cause. The condition of the press mill is such that we can not tell the cause of the explosion. It appears to have been one of those unexplained accidents that go with the powder business."

Three Killed Instantly.

The explosion occurred shortly after the men began work yesterday morning. It is believed to have been caused by a spark. George Gorby, Cret Simmons and Alonzo Smith were

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practice with W. S. Diven. Dr. W. H. H. Quick, who is in the race for representative because his friends put him there is a well-known banker and manufacturer of this city. The other three men represent the new wing of the young Republicans of the party and the large majority polled by them indicates their strength and popularity. Blanchard J. Horne is judge of the City Court. Homer Kimberlin, candidate for representative, is perhaps the youngest man on the ticket. Robert Hiatt is the assistant city engineer and has been a candidate for county surveyor against two opponents by storm.

"Land O' Goshen," Mayor Bests "Dads"

GOSHEN, Ind., March 17.—To prevent the city from acquiring the premises for use as a city hall, Mayor Kohler today defeated the plan of a hostile council and bought the historic Rowell mansion facing the court house square. He announced he will use it as a permanent residence. Last night the council voted to close an option on the premises for city hall purposes. The mayor got his deed before the option deal could be closed.

MARYLAND SENATOR IS CALLED BY DEATH ANGEL

Senator Whyte Succumbs to an Attack
of Erysipelas After Only a
Short Illness.

BALTIMORE, March 17.—United States Senator William F. Whyte died at his home in this city tonight. Senator Whyte was taken ill while in Washington last Thursday and returned home as soon as possible. Erysipelas developed and his condition became worse, although his physicians gave out encouraging statements until after noon today. About 4 o'clock this afternoon the senator suffered a sinking spell, but recovered wonderfully and was conscious until the final convulsion that ended in his death at 7:05 p. m.

GETS SMALL BOMB AND NOTE

Sioux City Man Scared Stiff by the
Hostile Demonstration.

SIoux CITY, Ia., March 17.—Accompanied by a small sheet of paper, on which was written "Look out," and signed "Black Hand," R. Herzoff, a Russian Jew, who conducts a grocery store at 400 West Seventh street, yesterday received a crudely fashioned dynamite bomb, with fuse attached. Herzoff was frantic with fear and at once called the police, who took charge of the bomb.

Herzoff said he had not the slightest idea of the identity of the sender, as he did not know he had an enemy.

Captain "Has His Irish Up"

GALVESTON, Tex., March 17.—When Capt. Moore of the British steamship Howthorn of Belfast, Ireland, here for a cargo, dressed ship today in honor of St. Patrick, he put the green emblem above the Stars and Stripes. This violation of the United States law that requires old Glory always to be at the top when displayed in the United States territory was

but he bluffly refused to comply with the law.

Not until he received a formal demand from the United States collector of customs of this port, accompanied by an order for the revenue cutter to stand ready and threaten to call the gunboat into service unless the order of the flags was reversed, did the Irish skipper yield, and then only to haul

FIRES INTO A CROWD

KILLS ONE; TRIES SUICIDE

Young Man at Cleveland Turns
Gun Loose on Diners---Reason
for Act Unknown.

CLEVELAND, Ohio, March 17.—William Krueger, 21 years of age, opened fire upon crowd of men and women in a restaurant tonight and instantly killed Edward Draudt, 40 years old, severely wounded James Barr and then attempted suicide. After the shooting, the young man went to the sidewalk and there turned the revolver against his own head and fired. It is believed Krueger will die.

Previous to the shooting Krueger is said to have stood at a side door leading into a saloon and from this vantage point scanned the faces of all the occupants of the restaurant. As Barr passed him, in the doorway, the police say, Krueger was jostled and opened fire upon Barr and then turned the revolver aimlessly upon the crowd. A panic ensued, men and women seeking shelter beneath the tables and a lunch counter.

It is believed by the police that Krueger was waiting for some particular man or woman who he thought to be in the restaurant, and that his anger was due largely to jealousy either fancied or real.

At the hospital Krueger lapsed into unconsciousness and up to a late hour no statement had been obtained from him.

BIG LUMBER PLANT BURNS.

HATTIESBURG, Miss., March 17.—The plant of the J. J. Newman Lumber Company, the largest sawmill in the State, was burned to the ground today with 5,000,000 feet of lumber. The loss will approximate \$200,000. Eight hundred hands are thrown out of employment.

About forty men were employed about the plant at the time of the explosion, but all escaped injury except the six in the press mill. The plant was not damaged, and said last night that operations would be resumed at once.

The company has offices in the Grand Opera House Block. Alfred G. Minge, manager, was notified immediately after the explosion and was on the scene. He said that the cause could not be determined. The plant has been in operation four years and this was the first accident.

"The property has not been damaged," said Mr. Minge. "The mill will be no interruption of the output of the plant is 1,200 logs a day. We have been running full speed."

"We have not been able to find anything that would give a clue to the cause. The condition of the mill is such that we can not tell the cause of the explosion. It appears to have been one of those unexplained misadventures that go with the powder business."

Three Killed Instantly

The explosion occurred shortly after the men began work yesterday morning. It is believed to have been caused by a spark. George Gerby, 35 years old, Charles Minge, 35 years old, and Charles Gorby were brought to St. Anthony's Hospital, where Minge died about 8 o'clock yesterday afternoon. It is said the other injured men will recover.

Gerby was 40 years old and was a widow and three children. Minge was 36 years old and is survived by a widow and five children. Simmonds and Smith were unmarried.

The funeral of Charles Minge will be held in the hospital, will be held at Ryan's morgue at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning. Burial will be at Oak Hill Cemetery, near Riley, Ind.

When the news of the explosion reached this city many people who had relatives working in the mill living in the vicinity left for Coalmont. Thousands of people were attracted to the place from nearby towns in Sullivan, Greene and Vigo counties.

LARGE BUILDINGS JARRED

Hundreds of People Rush to the Scene
of Explosion.

JASONVILLE, Ind., March 17.—The shock of the explosion in the Coalmont powder mill this morning was felt more plainly at this place than at any other that which occurred at Fontana. People here at first thought that an earthquake had occurred and ran out of their houses in the wildest excitement. The largest buildings in the town were shaken as if they would be torn down, and it seems as if the town suffered more from the explosion than did Coalmont, which is only about a mile from the mills. In some of the mines a panic was narrowly averted when the shock came. The mills in the vicinity of Coalmont were closed down for the day and the school was not opened.

Many hundred people from all over the surrounding town gathered in the mills but could not see anything as people were not permitted on the premises of the powder company. The trains running through Coalmont could hardly accommodate the people who flocked to the railroad.

Buildings Widely Scattered

The company owns about 100 acres of ground and the buildings are scattered over the entire territory. Most of them are placed in ravines, which still further tends to lessen the possibilities for an accident. There are more than 10,000 keas of powder in the mill.

Shaeffer takes a concrete and logical approach to her topic. In order to find female ancestors, she reasons, it is necessary to know a woman's legal status at that particular point in time and look at "those areas where the female ancestor interacts with the government and the legal system; where law, precedent, and even custom mandate the unequivocal identification of all parties, male and female."

Shaeffer's book focuses on

of women across history and point to places and records where family historians can look in order to uncover the identity of our women ancestors.

The French term "femme covert," literally meaning a "covered woman," best explains the status of married women in the past. Since a husband and wife were seen as one person under the law, a married woman's legal rights were suspended during the time of her marriage. A

and court records, affidavits, summonses, testimonies, obtaining licenses, receiving public welfare, dower rights, suffrage, and military records. The book covers women of all races and ethnic groups, from slave manumissions, to Asian immigrants, to women under the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

This book is full of interesting material that can lead us to unclocking the identity of our female ancestors. It is available from the Genealogical Publishing Company for

whose given name was Paul Eugene. He was born in Vigo County, Indiana on March 29, 1916, and adopted between 1928 and 1930 by Frank A. and Anna (Ford) Peterson, who were married in 1928. Paul was raised by his adopted parents in De Kalb County, Illinois. It's possible that Paul's mother was still living and believed that he visited her several times after the adoption. Contact Jennifer Cruse, 8620 E. Sunset Ave., Terre Haute, IN, e-mail wvgs@inwvgs.org.

Spring Hill Mine explosion kills eight 60 years ago

Eight miners were killed as the result of an explosion at 2:40 p.m., April 30, 1947, at the Spring Hill Mine, about one-half mile south of Terre Haute.

At the time it was the deadliest mine disaster in Vigo County annals. It was superseded only by the tragedy on March 2, 1961 at Viking Mine, west of the city, which claimed 22 lives.

The explosion occurred at a truck mine while a crew was blasting to create a new air shaft. The eight victims were approximately 2,000 feet from the mine's existing shaft.

The victims were Barney Riggs, Desire Francis Lete Sr., Calvin Wilson, Steve Otto Summers, Fern Earhart, Morton F. Gates, John Donaldson Brown and Chauncey Blackburn. Wilson, a mine boss, Earhart, Summers and Gates were from West Terre Haute. Brown was from Terre Haute and Blackburn was from Liggett.

Three members of the crew - Adam Harmon and Everett Marshall, both of West Terre Haute, and Frank Pangrazio of Clinton - were rescued.

Within 20 minutes of the explosion, Griff Morris, director of the Indiana Bureau of Mines and Mining, was at the site directing rescue work initiated by a crew from the Indiana Mine Rescue Station at West Terre Haute.

He was assisted by Williams Gibbons, assistant mine inspector, and Evan Evans, superintendent of the West Terre Haute Rescue Station.

Miners from several nearby working mines, particularly employees at Victory Mine east of the city, arrived to assist. Crews from the U.S. Bureau of Mines station at Vincennes

reached the scene at about 6 p.m. A crew from the rescue station at Bicknell got there about an hour later.

Smoke and dust delayed commencement of rescue operations for nearly three hours but,



HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

MIKE MCCORMICK

once initiated, rescue squads worked most of the night to extricate the victims.

Riggs, a truck driver who resided at 1707 Lafayette Ave., was the first victim brought to the surface at 10:15 p.m. The body of Lete, a jerryman from rural Terre

Haute, was brought up 15 minutes later.

Smoke and dust continued to escape from the shaft throughout the night. Oxygen apparatus was lowered into the mine to assist the rescue workers.

The Mine Rescue Squad ignored orders to come to the surface for medical examinations shortly after midnight, extracting Earhart and Blackburn from the rubble first.

Ross Wilson, a rescue squad member, was the son of victim Calvin Wilson. Lucien Busiere, another rescuer, was overcome by carbon monoxide gas and had to be resuscitated by the Terre Haute Fire Department.

Though safety regulations generally required that all men but the shot firer leave the mine before the blast, mine owner Harry Kerns of Tri-K Mine said the rule did not apply when 10 or fewer were working and

repair work was being done. The three rescued men were waiting at the bottom of the shaft for the blasting crew to fire six shots. Harmon, a mule driver, said the explosion occurred after the second shot.

The blast knocked down Harmon and Marshall, another driver, forcing them to let go of their mules. Noah Lenne, who was at the head of the shaft when the explosion occurred, saw the smoke and dust and promptly notified Darrell Kerns, the mine owner's son, who was working at the mine.

Within minutes of the explosion, Indiana State Police and Vigo County Sheriff's deputies blocked off the road to the mine to prevent accidents and to provide access to rescue workers. Within an hour, between 1,500 and 2,000 automobiles were lining roads within a mile of the mine. Ambulances from Terre Haute funeral homes were summoned to the scene and kept alternate watch throughout the night.

Terre Haute police was employed to restrict access and control the crowd. The Terre Haute office of the American Red Cross served coffee and sandwiches to workers and the entombed miners' families.

The bodies of all victims were recovered by 3 a.m. May 1. The following day, plans were initiated to snuff out the intense underground fire by sealing off the shaft. Roy Capps of the U.S. Bureau of Mines Safety Division was placed in charge.

The closing was delayed 24 hours while hearings were conducted.

Nearly 900 coal miners at three area coal mines took an unofficial "memorial holiday" on

May 1 "in sympathy" for the eight victims at Spring Hill. As a result, Dresser, Sexton and Blackhawk mines closed, consistent with a custom prevalent in many areas of the country.

Lt. Commander C.E. Poe of Terre Haute, Indiana administrator for the Coal Mines Administration, said that Spring Hill mine, owned by Spring Hill Coal Co., was not being mined for production at the time of the disaster.

Under a special agreement entered into on April 8, 1947 with federal inspectors and District 11 of the United Mine Workers of America, a limited number of men were permitted to drive an air shaft and provide "general clean-up work" in anticipation of a mine inspection.

Perry Kerns, the mine owner's brother, was asphyxiated at the mine on March 5, 1947, while setting off a shot.

At hearings conducted at the Indiana Mine Rescue Station at West Terre Haute on Friday, May 2, evidence apparently was persuasive that the underground crew ignited black powder contrary to orders from the owners and state and federal mine safety codes.

Morris urged the adoption of state legislation barring the use of black powder as an explosive in coal mines.

According to Morris, the use of black powder in mines like Spring Hill, where no undercutting of coal is done, was especially dangerous.

Founded in the early Twenties, Spring Hill Mine was about 25 years old in 1947. When fully operational, it produced about 40,000 tons of coal annually from a 4½-foot No. 5 seam and employed 42 men.

T FEB 1 1 1978

Four lives claimed in Sullivan blast

By JACK HUGHES
Tribune Staff Writer

Four people died and several were injured in Friday's explosion and fire which leveled several structures on the Sullivan square and damaged others.

The dead were identified as Mrs. Katherine Blackburn, 37, wife of Indiana State Trooper Dan Blackburn; and proprietor of the Girls Country clothing store; Wilbur Romine, 62, of Sullivan, and Gerald Jennings, 48, of Shelburn, both employees of the Ohio Valley Gas Corp., and Mrs. Teresa Bean, 28, Carlisle, co-owner of the Candle Cupboard shop. Both the candle shop and the clothing store were destroyed.

Narrowly escaping death was Hestine Spoonmore, 63, Carlisle, according to Sullivan Sheriff Bob Hiatt, who reported she was in the Sullivan Bakery, "... trapped behind the ovens," and that her clothing was on fire by the time rescuers were able to free her. They included sheriff's Deputy Ron Jones and Gary Cooper, described as a civilian volunteer, one of many who rushed to help.

Hiatt expressed profound appreciation for quick assistance from private individuals and organizations as well as emergency services from other communities aiding the work of Sullivan city police, county forces and Civil Defense volunteers.

The sheriff and a city policeman were among the first on the scene. Hiatt was about a block away when the explosion occurred. "I had just turned onto Court Street," he said, and saw the buildings "... just collapse" and then heard the explosion.

He said Mrs. Blackburn had smelled gas at her shop. Unaware of work under way in the alley behind the store, she took her daughter outside the shop, sending her to a store across the street, turned to run down toward the candle shop to warn Mrs. Bean. Her body was found near the door of the shop. She had massive injuries, but no burns. The other bodies were found in the area which had held the shop or in the alley.

Those victims suffered burns as well as other severe injuries.

Reported in critical condition Saturday at Mary Sherman Hospital in Sullivan was Charles Robbins, 58, of Sullivan, with multiple fractures and lacerations. It was noted, however, that there had been some improvement in his condition overnight.

Mrs. Spoonmore remained in the Sullivan hospital with lacerations and a fractured arm, but was listed in satisfactory condition. Also in satisfactory condition was Frances Van Sant, 50, of Terre Haute. Wayne Hall, 31, Carlisle, with fractures, was admitted and later transferred to Terre Haute.

Others released following treatment included a volunteer fireman, Bill Springer, 22, Sullivan; Ruth Brooks, 37, Sullivan; Jean Ravellette, 54, Oaktown; Cobe Heggenbottom, 18, Shelburn; Bernard King, 51, Sullivan; James Lewis, 32, Shelburn; Mark McCammon, 14, and his brother, James, 11, of Sullivan, and Rob Bogard, 42, Merom, according to Juanita Wilson, R.N., nursing supervisor at the Sullivan hospital.

Of the scene of the explosion, Sheriff Hiatt reported, "That part of the square is gone," in a shocked tone, adding that he had never seen anything quite like the sudden tragedy which wiped out four lives and the downtown corner southwest of the courthouse square.

The Beauty Shop and the Odd Fellows lodge hall were among the buildings consumed in the fire following the blast. Heavy damage was described at the Sullivan Daily Times newspaper and the Max Miller realty office. Lesser damages were reported at the bank, an appliance store and other business places.

Reports indicated the explosion may have been triggered when a backhoe operating in the alley behind the stores cut through a gas line. The gas company employees reportedly had been called to check on a suspected gas leak.

Police logged the blast at 3:11 p.m. Later, Ralph Clem, district manager of

Ohio Valley said, "We got a call. Our guys no more than got there and boom!" Most of the injured were treated for minor injuries, according to reports which noted in particular facial lacerations from flying glass. They included two newsboys who had come to pick up their papers from the Sullivan newspaper office and were on the street when the explosion occurred. "It's a miracle none of these people lost their eyes," said one state trooper.

Robbins, a city employee working on the snow removal operation in the alley, was said to have been buried up to his neck in flaming rubble. Gary Haskins, an off duty state trooper driving by, was among rescuers first reaching Robbins and helping to free him. Another trooper, Wayne Hall, reportedly carried Mrs. Spoonmore to safety on his back as she was freed by others. He was not the Wayne Hall who was injured, however, according to reports Saturday.

The fire was fought by several area units assisting Sullivan firefighters who brought the blaze under control within three hours and remained on the frigid scene to guard against a later outbreak of flames. Assisting units included those from Dugger, Linton and Farmersburg.

Services for Mrs. Blackburn are to be conducted by the Rev. Jerry Crouse 3:30 p.m. Sunday at the Farmersburg United Methodist Church. Survivors include, in addition to her husband, three daughters, Kelley, Polly and Peggy, all at home; two sisters, Mrs. Janet McMorro, Beech Grove, and Mrs. Freda Riggins, Farmersburg; and her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Otis Jeffers, Route 1, Farmersburg.

Funeral arrangements for the other victims are pending, for Jennings at the McHugh Shelburn Chapel. He is survived by his wife, Shirley; a son, Wayne; two sisters, Mrs. Reba Chambers and Miss Neda Jennings, both of rural Shelburn; two brothers, Byrle Jennings of rural Shelburn and Denzil Jennings of Farmersburg.

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Community Affairs File

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DEMOLISHED — The Sullivan Bakery was one of several business places destroyed on the southwest corner of the Sullivan Courthouse Square Friday in explosion and fire which killed four people. Adjacent offices and shops, including the Sullivan Daily Times on the far right of the photo were heavily

damaged. Firefighters braved extreme cold as well as fire and the danger of another blast, not only during the three-hour battle against the blaze, but in the night-long vigil to protect against later fire.

T.H. Disab. 10/20/64

Locust St. Structure Is Leveled

By CLIFF LINEDECKER and GARY MINICH

Twelve men and a woman were injured at 11:25 Tuesday morning when an explosion ripped through the two-story Trading Post, a used furniture sales building, in the near northside, completely leveling the structure and shattering windows in other houses and stores in the immediate area.

Early reports indicated that none of the 12 were critically injured, although three of the men treated underwent minor surgery.

A crowd estimated at from 500 to 600 people quickly collected about the explosion site at the three-way intersection of Lafayette Ave., 6th St. and Locust St., hampering rescue work until police and firemen sealed off the area.

Police quickly slapped on a "no smoking ban" because of the presence of heavy gas fumes, as workers were attempting to tear away the wreckage and determine if anyone was still trapped in the basement. Shortly before 1 p.m., Chief of Police Frank Riddle and other spokesmen at the scene said it appeared unlikely that anyone remained in the building.

Harry M. Johnson, 56, of 320 S. 14½ St., owner of the Trading Post, severe lacerations and burns, in surgery.

Harry Custer, 18, of 825 N. 4th St., an employee, burns and lacerations, in surgery.

William Lukens, 35, of 1307 Maple Ave., an assistant city building inspector, lacerations and burns, in fair condition.

Cleve Daughterty, 21, Fontanet, released to his home.

James Beasley, 24, of 1601 N. 30th St., dismissed.

Joseph Murray, 58, of 1901 N. 3rd St., in X-ray.

Ronnie West, 24, of 2015 Washington St., no report.

Robert Bridgewater, 46, RR 6, fair condition.

Joseph Beasley, 45, of RR 6, fair.

Mrs. William Lukens, 29, wife of the inspector, dismissed.

At St. Anthony's hospital were:

Homer Cress, 40, Seelyville, no report.

Dr. George Justus, 30, of 95 Allendale Pl., no report.

Early reports indicated that the explosion occurred as a crew from the Terre Haute Gas Co. was repairing a meter there. Company spokesmen, however, refused to comment or to confirm that their employees were working there or were among the injured.

At least two of the injured were blown completely out of the building. Custer was working on the second floor of the old structure when the blast occurred and was pitched out onto the sidewalk below.

Investigators said the young man picked himself up, and returned to the rubble to pull his employer out.

Also credited with helping to rescue the injured was an In-

diana State College Student, Ronald Alexis, 24. Alexis was returning home from lunch, it was learned at the scene, and was about a block away when the explosion occurred. He reportedly dragged three of the injured out of the rubble before emergency crews arrived.

Buildings Damaged

Nearby buildings also suffered from the blast as a wood frame structure adjoining the main brick building to the north had a wall blown out and other damage. There was no fire, however, and firemen theorized that the force of the explosion was so great that it smothered any flames which might have occurred.

A series of blasts have plagued Terre Haute since Jan. 2, 1963, when 17 persons were killed and 60 injured in the explosion of the Home Packing Co., a meat processing plant.

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Community Affairs File



WRECKAGE OF TRADING POST AT LAFAYETTE AND LOCUST ST.



REMOVING INJURED FROM DEBRIS AT SCENE OF EXPLOSION

Trading Post

Terre Haute Blast Leak

Community Affairs File

Officials Probe Gas Near Terre Haute

T.H. Disaster - INDIANAPOLIS NEWS 10/21/64

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AP Photo.

Terre Haute fireman pushes debris aside as ruins are probed for explosion victims.

By BILL ROBERTS
Staff Reporter

TERRE HAUTE, Ind. —
The area in which Terre Haute's seventh explosion in less than two years occurred remained sealed off today as officials from the state fire marshal's office probed the debris.

The Trading Post, a second-hand store occupying a 2-story brick building at the triangular intersection of 6th, Locust and Lafayette, was blown to bits at 11:20 a.m. yesterday.

Six of the 17 persons injured in the blast required hospitalization.

One policeman described the explosion as so intense that "you couldn't even find two bricks still stuck together."

Bernard M. Sweeney, chief investigator for the fire marshal's office who is directing

the investigation, said, "This obviously was a low-grade gas explosion. There apparently had been a gas leak about 100 feet from the area for some time before the explosion."

WERE INSTALLING GAS METER

Two employees of the Terre Haute Gas Corp. were installing a meter in the basement of the Trading Post when the blast occurred, ripping out windows in nearby homes and businesses and hurling bricks into the street.

The utility declined to comment on the cause of the explosion.

Police Chief Frank Riddle and Chief of Detectives John O'Leary said they could not tell whether the gas leak had caused the explosion or the explosion had caused the leak.

One Terre Haute resident said, "People are getting so they are afraid to go into a building. You never know when something is going to blow up."

It was reported that the gas utility has been drilling test holes in various parts of this city of 72,000 for several months because of the alarming number of explosions.

Some testing was done recently in the vicinity of the Trading Post.

There had been erroneous reports that William Lukens, 35-year-old city building inspector who was injured in the blast, was at the Trading Post to condemn the building.

'WENT UP IN THE AIR'

Mrs. Lukens also was injured slightly.

William Wyllie, 63, operator of a liquor store across the street from the Trading Post, said, "The whole building seemed to go straight up in the air. For a few seconds you could see nothing but dust."

Hundreds of jittery residents rushed to the scene. Most of the injured were buried in the rubble.

Windows were blown from the front of Saps Bakery, west of the Trading Post, and the Aluminum Center, just east of the second-hand store.

It was the seventh explosion here since Jan. 2, 1963, when 17 persons were killed and 60 injured at the Home Packing Co., six blocks from the Trading Post.

In serious condition at St. Anthony's Hospital are:

Dr. George Justus, 38, a dentist who was a customer at the shop.

Homer Cress, 46, Terre Haute, a gas company employee.

In satisfactory condition at Union Hospital in addition to Lukens, are:

Harold Johnson, 36, Terre Haute, owner of the store.

Harry Custer, 18, Terre Haute, store employee.

Lloyd Nolan, 48, Sullivan, a customer.

Trading Post

Gas Explosion Injures 17 And Demolishes Building

T.H. Star 10/21/64

Four Suffer Burns From Flash Fire

A thundering explosion shortly before noon Tuesday leveled an old two-story brick structure located at 616 Locust Street, caused injury to 17 persons and damaged several business buildings in the neighborhood.

Bernard Sweeney, chief fire investigator for the state fire marshal's office, who arrived at the scene shortly after the explosion, said he believed the blast was a low grade gas explosion, the same type that destroyed Home Packing Company and a private residence located on South Seventeenth Street early in 1963.

According to Sweeney the type of a blast can be determined in part by the manner in which debris is scattered following the blast.

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Sweeney, although on leave of absence from the state office, was requested by the state fire marshal to investigate the explosion.

Two persons were admitted to St. Anthony Hospital within minutes after the blast, both suffering from severe injuries.

Homer Cress, 40, Seelyville, an employee of the Terre Haute Gas Corp., who was working in the building at the time of the blast, and Dr. George Justus, 30, 95 Allendale Place, Terre Haute dentist, who apparently was a customer in the building, were taken to St. Anthony Hospital.

Both men suffered second and third degree burns and were placed in intensive care ward Cress also suffered a severe laceration on the left leg.

Late Tuesday night attendants at St. Anthony Hospital reported the condition of Justus and Cress as serious. Both men remained in the intensive care section.

Fifteen persons were taken to Union Hospital. Five were admitted and were held for treatment. Ten were treated and released.

The blast demolished the building, located on a three way intersection of Locust, North Sixth streets and Lafayette avenue and was occupied by a secondhand store called the Trading Post.

The owner, Harold Johnson, 56, 320 Gilbert ave. and an employee, Harry Custer, 18, 825 N. 4th St., were both admitted to Union Hospital, Johnson suffered burns about the face and neck and a possible leg injury. Custer was hospitalized with second degree burns of the face, neck and hands. Hospital attendants reported Tuesday evening the condition of both men was satisfactory.

Persons who were either taken to Union Hospital by ambulances or reported there for treatment were:

Harry Custer, 18, 825 N. 4th St., admitted, burns on neck, face and hands.

Harold Johnson, 56, 320 Gilbert Ave., admitted, burns about face and hands and possible leg injury.

William Lukens, 35, 1307 Maple Ave., admitted, possible injury to right shoulder and left ankle.

Mrs. William Lukens, 29, 1307 Maple Ave., treated and released.

Joe Murray, 58, 1900 N. 3rd St., admitted, multiple lacerations and burns of hands.

Lloyd Nolan, 44, 1104 N. Court St., Sullivan, admitted, burns and lacerations of face.

Joe Beasley, 45, RR 6, Box 569, treated for cuts, burns, bruises, and released.

Robert Bridgewater, 46, RR 6, treated for cuts, burns and bruises and released.

James Beasley, 24, 1601 N. 30th St., treated for cuts, burns and bruises and released.

Cleve Daugherty, 21, Fontanet, treated for cuts, burns and bruises and released.

Ronald Weston, 24, 2015 Washington Ave., treated for cuts, bruises, burns and released.

Marlene Norris, 27, 1109 N. 4th St., an autoist passing the scene at the time, treated and released.

Billy Grayless, 39, 674 3rd Ave., and his son Billy, Jr., 15, who were outside the building, treated and released.

Jerry Marshall, 23, RR 5, treated and released.

Several of the victims also suffered from dust inhalation in addition to injuries.

According to persons living in the neighborhood, the blast occurred at 11:25 a.m. Within minutes, city police and fire equipment were on the scene, as were local ambulances and other emergency equipment.

By 12:20 p.m. all persons had been removed from the debris.

For awhile it was feared persons might be trapped in the collapsed building a large crane from the Dennis Trucking Co. was brought to the scene to move bricks, roofing and other debris that littered the spot.

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Community Affairs File

With the exception of one very small blaze at the rear of the building that was quickly extinguished there was no fire. Fire officials said the burns suffered by victims likely were caused from a "flash" fire that occurred at the moment of the blast. Firemen said it is common in a blast for the subsequent concussion to snuff out any blaze.

Four other buildings bordering the intersection where the explosion took place were damaged. The Thrift Store, 614 Locust St., operated by Forest Boswell suffered wall damage on the east side of the building as well as glass damage. The building, reportedly owned by Don Bennett, was located west of the Trading Post.

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A building occupied by Trent & Son upholsters, 831 N. 6th St. had some windows broken on the second floor. Another building located on the northeast corner of Lafayette Avenue and Locust Street and occupied by the Aluminum Center, had the front blasted.

A vacant filling station at Sixth and Locust Streets had all the glass blown from the front section.

Although the rumble of the explosion was felt in the emergency room at Union Hospital, several blocks away, miraculously, little damage of severe nature was reportedly done to residences in the immediate area, other than some cracked windows and plaster.

Spokesmen for the Terre Haute Gas Corporation said the two employees who were working in the building at the time of the blast were installing a gas meter. One of the men was in the basement and the other on the first floor.

Officials of the company who visited the scene said Tuesday night there was no indication as to what triggered the explosion. They said a thorough investigation would be made and "experts" would be called in.

Debris was thrown for hundreds of feet surrounding the area, as broken glass, bits of merchandise from the destroyed building, pieces of bricks and even a man's straw hat littered the streets.

Crews from the Terre Haute Gas Corp. and an out-of-town contractor serving the local utility were at work shortly after the explosion, drilling test holes to locate leaking gas and to allow ventilation from the soil. Trenching operations also were

under way at the same time in an effort to locate possible gas leaks, and to allow ventilation.

Lukens, a city building code employe was at first reported to be at the building to in-

spect it. However, City Building Inspector Harry O. Forbes said Tuesday night Lukens apparently was not there on official business.

Forbes said that Lukens was

employed by his department to enforce the minimum housing code for the city. Lukens and his wife were both injured.

There was no explanation

why Lukens' wife was with him.

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Several hours after the explosion, investigators said they measured concentrations of about five per cent gas in the air.

Adding to the confusion shortly after the blast occurred was an influx of sight-seers who crowded into the area. Order was quickly restored by police and firemen and rescuers continued with their job.

The exact location of all persons injured at the time of the explosion had not been determined Tuesday night. It was reported nine persons were in the building at the time of the explosion, two were in a telephone booth on a traffic island located in the intersection of the streets in front of the building, some were walking on the sidewalk and some were driving along Lafayette Avenue.

Emergency vehicles operated by the Salvation Army and the American Red Cross were on hand serving coffee and food to workers in the area.

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Individual acts of heroism were evidenced at the scene in rescue work. Harry Custer, an employe of the Trading Post who was working on the second floor of the building, assisted in rescuing Johnson, his employer, from the rubble.

Reportedly an Indiana State College student, Ronald Alexis, was nearby the scene and pulled three of the injured from the building. Employees of the Terre Haute Gas Corp. and city police and firemen helped in rescue work.

Police Chief Frank Riddle, Fire Chief Norm Fesler, Sweeney, and Assistant Deputy Marshal Jack Hayes were on the scene immediately following the blast.

Terre Haute Gas Corp. per-

sonnel and civil defense workers arrived shortly after the explosion.

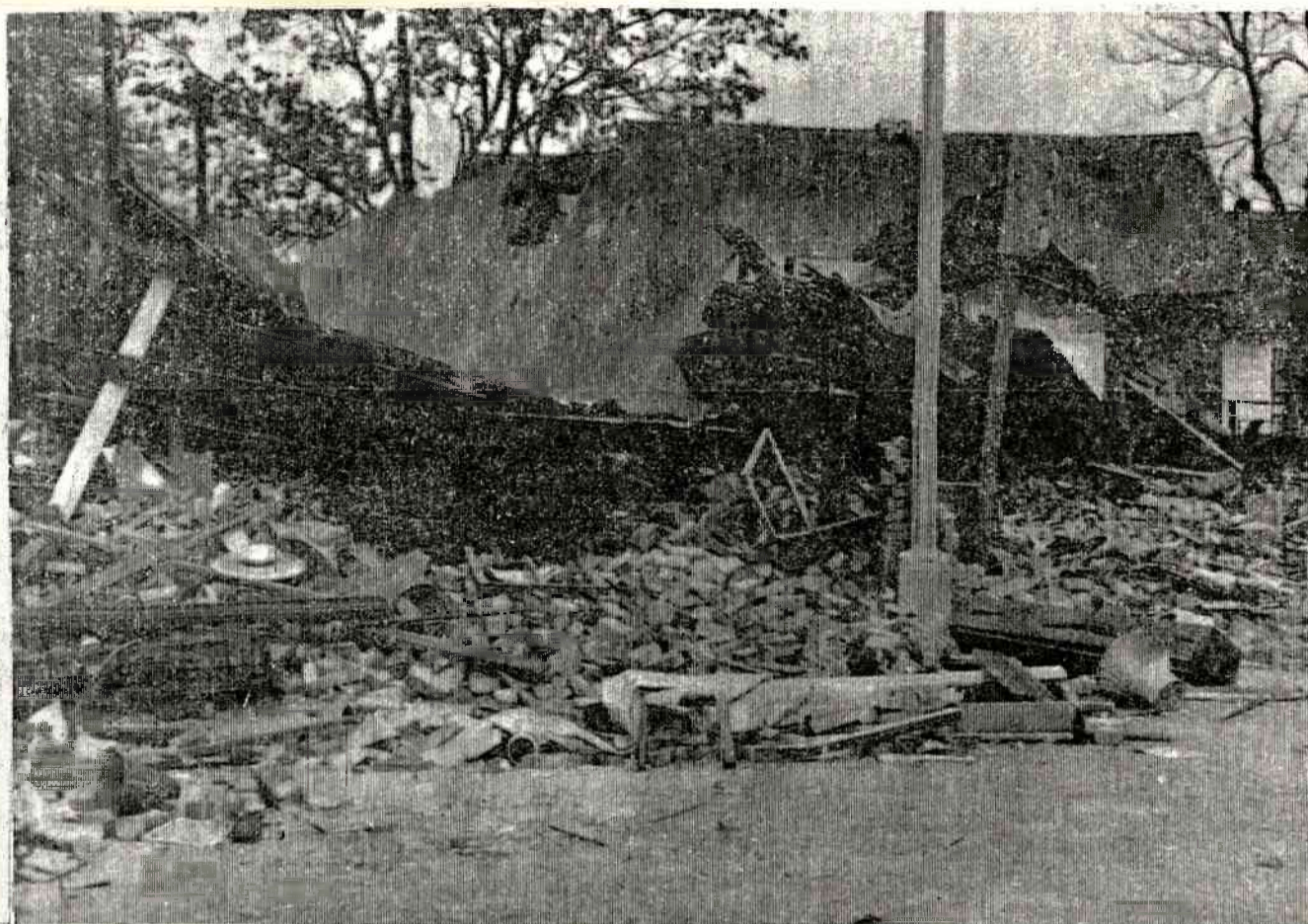
Ambulances from Ryan, Thomas, Hickman, Bedino and DeBaun Funeral Homes were at the blast area within minutes after the alarm.



REMOVING DEBRIS IN SEARCH—When it was feared victims might be trapped in the crushed building, a mobile crane equipped with bucket was moved to the disaster scene Tuesday to move the pile of bricks, roofing, and other debris that accumulated after an explosion demolished The Trading Post, a used merchandise store located at 616 Locust St. (Chuck Strausburg Photo)



HELP FOR THE INJURED — Two unidentified men assist Homer Cress, 40, an employe of the Terre Haute Gas Corp. from the wreckage of the explosion-razed building occupied by the Trading Post, 616 Locust St., after a blast believed caused by gas wrecked the building Tuesday. Cress was taken to St. Anthony Hospital suffering from burns and lacerations. (Chuck Strausburg Photo)



TUESDAY'S BLAST SCENE — Taken only minutes after the explosion, photo shows total demolition of the Trading Post a two-story brick structure located at 616 Locust St., that was destroyed Tuesday. The blast injured 17 persons, two seriously.

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Community Affairs File

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Victims Made Lucky Escape; Two Serious

By CLIFF LINEDECKER

A probe of the shattering explosion which ripped apart the old two-story Trading Post building at 616 Locust St., and injured 17 persons Tuesday, was continuing here Wednesday.

As investigators continued to dig through the ruins of the second hand store Wednesday, it was reported that seven of those injured were still hospitalized here, two in serious condition. No one was killed.

Most seriously injured were Dr. George Justus, 30, 95 Al-lendale Place, who was a customer thought to have been on the second floor of the building, and Homer Cress, 40, Seelyville, an employee of the Terre Haute Gas Corp., who was reportedly helping to install a new meter in the structure when it was ripped apart by the blast. Both men were in the intensive care ward of St. Anthony hospital with second and third degree burns. Cress also suffered a severe laceration of the left leg.

Others still under care at Union Hospital and said to be in satisfactory condition, were: William Lukens, 35, of 1307 Maple Ave. city minimum housing code officer; Harry Custer, 18, of 825 N. 4th St., an employee; Harold Johnson, 56, 320 Gilbert Ave., owner and operator of the store; Lloyd Nolan, 44, Sullivan, thought to have a customer, and Joseph Murray 58 1900 N. 3rd St., gas company worker. Lukens reportedly suffered injuries to his right shoulder and left ankle; Custer had second degree burns of the face and hands; Johnson burned his face and neck and had lacerations of the legs; Nolan received burns and lacerations of the face; and Murray had multiple lacerations and burns of the hands.

Others are Treated

Others treated and released were: Joseph Beasley, 45 RR 6, cuts, bruns, and bruises; his son, James Beasley, 24, of 1601 N. 30th St., cuts, burns and bruises; Mrs. William Lukens, 29, of 1307 Maple Ave., minor cuts; Robert Bridgewater, 46, of RR 6, cuts, burns, and bruises; Cleve Daughterty, 21, Fontanet, cuts, burns, and bruises; Ronald Weston, 24, of

2015 Washington Ave., cuts, bruises and burns; Marlene Norris, 27, of 1109 N. 4th St., shock; Jerry Marshall, 23, RR 5, shock; Billy Grayless, Sr., 39, of 674 3rd. Ave., shock; and his son, Billy, Jr., 15, shock.

The Beasley's, Bridgewater, and Weston, had entered the store minutes before the explosion, it was learned. Grayless and his son were at telephone booth across the street and were badly shaken up, although the booth was undamaged.

The Norris woman was driving by in an auto.

Early investigation indicated that nine of those injured were either in the store as customers or working, and the others were passing motorists or were standing nearby.

Start Investigation

Spokesmen for the Terre Haute fire department Wednesday morning reported that the blast area was still blocked off.

The probe was being headed by Bernard Sweeney, chief fire investigator for the state fire marshal's office, with co-operation of city firemen, police, and the gas corporation.

Sweeney blamed the explosion on an accumulation of gas and said it was similar to the blast which destroyed the Home Packing Company and a private residence on S. 17th St., on Jan. 2, 1963.

In identifying the blast as a low grade gas explosion, he pointed out that his determination was made by inspecting the manner in which debris was scattered. Sweeney was called off vacation to head the investigation.

The state official said that gas had been detected in the area prior to the blast and remarked that test holes were being dug. Sweeney estimated that a gas leak had existed about 100 feet from the area prior to the explosion and explained that he drew his conclusion from soil which was permeated with gas.

Authorities Wednesday were still banning smoking in the area, as investigators continued to dig through the rubble. The old brick structure was completely leveled and debris collapsed on a pickup truck parked along the Lafayette Ave., side of the store site. It was thought that the truck was owned by Johnson.

The thunderous explosion at 11:25 a.m. shook buildings in an area for several blocks and, according to witnesses, sent nearby pedestrians tumbling to the sidewalk.

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William Wyllie, 63, operator of a store across Lafayette Ave., from the Trading Post said "The whole building seemed to go straight up in the air." The windows were shattered in Wyllie's structure and in other area buildings. Wyllie claimed that nothing could be seen but dust for a few minutes after the explosion.

City police Det. Earl Bealmar, one of the first to arrive at the scene, declared that "It's a miracle that bunch of them weren't killed. Everything else was blown to pieces."

Rescue workers were at first afraid that more victims may have been trapped in the basement of the structure, but were hampered in their efforts to clear the rubble by a horde of curiosity seekers who quickly converged on the scene. Police and firemen were rapidly organized to hold the crowd back from the immediate disaster area while rescuers turned to the job of checking for more injured. All persons were removed from the debris by 12:20 p.m.

Emergency vehicles operated by the Salvation Army and the American Red Cross were on hand shortly after the blast, serving coffee and food to workers.

Ambulances from Ryan, Thomas, Hickman, Bedino, and the Debaun Funeral Homes transported the injured to hospitals.

Fire Quickly Doused

Rescue and investigation operations were led at the scene by Police Chief Frank Riddle, Fire Chief Norman Fessler, Assistant Deputy State Fire Marshall Jack Hayes, and by Sweeney.

With the exception of one very small blaze at the rear of the building that was quickly extinguished there was no fire. Fire officials said the burns suffered by victims likely were caused from a "flash" fire that occurred at the moment of the blast. Firemen said it is common in a blast for the subsequent concussion to snuff out any blaze.

Four other buildings bordering the intersection where the explosion took place were damaged. The Thrift Store, 614 Locust St., operated by Forest Boswell suffered wall damage on the east side of the building as well as glass damage. The building, reportedly owned by Don Bennett, was located west of the Trading Post.

A building occupied by Trent & Son upholsters, 831 N. 6th St., had some windows broken on the second floor. Another building located on the northeast corner of Lafayette Ave. and Locust St. and occupied by the Aluminum Center, had the front blasted.

A vacant filling station at Sixth and Locust Sts. had all the glass blown from the front section.

Residences Escape

Although the rumble of the explosion was felt in the emergency room at Union Hospital, several blocks away, miraculously, little damage of severe nature was reportedly done to residences in the immediate area.

Spokesmen for the Terre Haute Gas Corporation said the two employees who were working in the building at the time of the blast were installing a gas meter. One of the men was in the basement and the other on the first floor.

Officials of the company who visited the scene said Tuesday night there was no indication as to what triggered the explosion. They said a thorough investigation would be made and "experts" would be called in.

Debris was thrown for hundreds of feet surrounding the area, as broken glass, bits of merchandise from the destroyed building, pieces of bricks and even a man's straw hat littered the streets.

Crews from the Terre Haute Gas Corp. and an out-of-town contractor serving the local utility were at work shortly after the explosion, drilling test holes to locate leaking gas and to allow ventilation from the soil. Trenching operations also were under way at the same time in an effort to locate possible gas leaks, and to allow ventilation.

Offer Theory for Latest Explosion

T.H. TREB. 10/22/64

The recent explosion which wrecked the Trading Post on the near north side was blamed Thursday by President and General Manager R. S. Brunner of the Terre Haute Gas Corp., on "a corroded pipe that probably gave way", as the Indiana Public Service Corporation revealed it was entering the investigation.

Declaring that the local gas firm has spent \$500,000 in the last eight months to improve property and in maintenance work on the system, Bruner said the latest blast may have been caused by failure of the pipe while two workmen were installing a gas meter in the structure.

"The system here is in very good shape", he claimed, "and that there is no particular reason for the people of Terre Haute to be concerned."

Bernard M. Sweeney, chief investigator for the state fire marshal's office, however, charged Wednesday that heavy accumulations of gas were still present in the blast area and he enlisted assistance of the PSC in carrying out the probe. He claimed, in his request to the PSC, —that the gas company —and its employees were uncooperative and were not making information available

that must be obtained to determine if there is the possibility of more explosions.

PSC To Investigate

Merton Stanley, PSC chairman, said its investigation will be concentrated on determining if the gas company is doing what it can to avert more explosions and if it is following safety regulations. He recalled that the Tuesday explosion which resulted in injury to 17 persons, is the seventh to occur in Terre Haute in less than two years.

More than 100 persons have been injured and 22 lives lost, he added.

The latest explosion Tuesday leveled a two-story brick building housing the Trading Post, a second-hand store. It was blamed on a gas leak by investigators.

Brunner said utility workers had been in the explosion area within the last two weeks "but did not find any sign of gas." He said a defect was found in a gas connection and corrected three days before the explosion.

Conduct Steady Search

Brunner said the utility and the Southern Cross Co., Atlanta, Ga., have been working steady in search of leaks since the Home Packing Co. plant blew up Jan. 2, 1963, killing 17 and injuring 58 persons.

Seven of those injured in the Trading Post explosion were still hospitalized Thursday morning.

In serious condition at St. Anthony hospital were Homer Cress, 40, Seelyville, a gas company employee, and Dr. George Justus, 30, of 95 Alendale Place, a local dentist who was a customer at the store. Both suffered second and third degree burns.

In satisfactory condition at Union Hospital were: Harry Custer, 18, a store employee; Harold Johnson, 56, owner and operator of the store; William Lukens, 35, Terre Haute City minimum housing code officer; Joseph Murray, 58, a gas company worker, and Lloyd Nolan, 44, a customer. All are from Terre Haute except Nolan, who is a Sullivan resident.

Police Thursday were still barricading an approximate four-block area about the blast scene at 616 Locust St.

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TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA

PSC Investigates Terre Haute Blast

Indpls News 10/22/64
Special to The News

TERRE HAUTE, Ind.—The Public Service Commission has joined the investigation of an explosion that wrecked a 2-story building and injured 17 persons.

Merton Stanley, PSC chairman, said its investigation will concern whether or not the Terre Haute Gas Corp. "is doing what it can to avert explosions and whether safety regulations are being followed."

The blast, which demolished the Trading Post second-hand furniture store Tuesday, was the seventh in Terre Haute in less than two years.

The series of accidents has claimed 22 lives and injured more than 100 persons. Officials have blamed leaking gas in five explosions.

Bernard M. Sweeney, chief investigator for the state fire marshal's office, reported yesterday that officials of the gas utility were not co-operating with him in the investigation.

Roy S. Brunner, the utility's general manager, refused to comment on Sweeney's statement.

Sweeney said his investigation found gas still in the area "... sufficient to cause an explosion in an area up to 75 feet from the original blast scene."

A four-block area around the leveled building is blocked off to the public and patrolled by Terre Haute police.

Two of the victims in the explosion were reported in serious condition today in an intensive care ward at a Terre Haute hospital.

They are Homer Cress, 40, Seelyville, a gas corporation employe working in the building at the time of the explosion, and Dr. George Justus, 30, a Terre Haute dentist who was in the building when it exploded.

Both suffered second and third-degree burns.

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